

Regents Refuse to Renew Miss Davis' UCLA Contract



DEMONSTRATION -Communist Angela Davis, UCLA philosophy instructor whose contract was not renewed by UC regents, leads pickets marching at State Building on behalf of three black prisoners who are charged in the slaying of a guard at Soledad Prison.
 Times photo by Ray Graham

4 Public Talks Cited in Board's 15-6 Decision

BY WILLIAM TROMBLEY
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After a long pursuit, the UC Board of Regents Friday at last caught up with Angela Davis, UCLA's Communist philosophy teacher.

After a three-hour, closed-door meeting here, the regents voted 15 to 6 not to renew Miss Davis' contract as an acting assistant professor of philosophy for the 1970-71 academic year.

Regents voting for the action included Gov. Reagan, Lt. Gov. Ed Reinecke, Assembly Speaker Robert T. Monagan and Max Rafferty, state superintendent of public instruction.

Also voting against renewal of her contract were Allan Grant, Joseph A. Moore Jr., Wendell W. Witter, Edwin W. Pauley, Edward W. Carter, John E. Canaday, DeWitt A. Higgs, W. Glenn Campbell, William French Smith, Robert O. Reynolds and Dr. John H. Lawrence.

Six Members Opposed

Regents who opposed the action were UC President Charles J. Hitch, William E. Forbes, William M. Roth, Mrs. Edward Heller, William K. Coblentz and Frederick G. Dutton.

Regents Catherine Hearst, Norton Simon and Dean A. Watkins were absent.

Miss Davis heard the news on the steps of the State Building here, where she was speaking in behalf of three black prisoners accused of murdering a guard in Soledad Prison.

"What has happened to me," she said when told of the regents' vote, "is only a tiny, minute example of what is happening to them (the prisoners)."

"I suppose I just lost my job because of my political beliefs. The Soledad brothers (can) lose their lives."

Asked if she planned to challenge or appeal the decision, she said:

"I challenge everything the oppressor does . . . I appeal what is happening to me by struggling for people like Bobby Seale and others who are in prisons on trumped-up criminal charges."

Cite Public Speeches

She would not predict the possible effect the action might have on campuses in the state, saying, "That remains to be seen."

As expected, the regents based their action on public speeches by the 26-year-old militant black teacher.

They also expressed concern over her "lack of progress" on her Ph.D. dissertation and said her rehiring would be "an unwarranted priority in the face of other established and more pressing faculty staff needs."

But the major reason given for the board's action was to be found in four speeches Miss Davis delivered—two in Los Angeles and one in Berkeley last October and a fourth at UC Santa Barbara in February.

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ANGELA DAVIS

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The majority report said these speeches were "so extreme, so antithetical to the protection of academic freedom, and so obviously deliberately false in several respects as to be inconsistent with qualification for appointment to the faculty of the University of California."

The majority leaned heavily on the findings of a UCLA ad hoc faculty committee.

This committee found that Miss Davis had not used propaganda on her students and that her political activities had not interfered with her teaching duties. (Both these charges had been made earlier by several regents.)

But the ad hoc committee, made up of senior professors from several departments, also found that "Miss Davis' choice of language in some of her public statements is inconsistent with accepted standards of appropriate restraint in the exercise of academic freedom . . ."

The committee recommended that these statements "be taken into account, together with all other relevant factors, by the appropriate faculty and administrative authorities when consideration is given to the renewal of Miss Davis' present contract of employment."

Misreading Claimed

However, the committee concluded that the statements did not warrant any disciplinary action, nor did they provide a reason for nonreappointment.

After the decision was announced, a UCLA faculty leader said the majority action was based on "a complete misreading of the ad hoc committee report."

"This was either extremely disingenuous or an outright fraud," he said.

Chancellor Young considered Miss Davis' public statements before recommending to the regents a month ago that she be reappointed for a second probationary year.

The regents then took the decision out of Young's hands and turned it over to the board, acting as a committee of the whole. It was this committee's report which was approved by the majority Friday.

After the meeting, Young told reporters the regents' action might have short-run "public relations" gains but in the long run "will be harmful in a variety of ways to the university."

He said the action "will have a serious impact" on faculty morale and probably will lead to censure of UC by the American Assn. of University

Professors for violations of academic freedom.

However, the chancellor said he will enforce the regents' decision. "They have the authority to make that decision and that decision will stand unless it is reversed by the courts," the chancellor stated.

While the regents effectively terminated Angela Davis' career as a faculty member with Friday's action there was much confusion as to how often, if at all, she will be permitted on campus as a guest lecturer.

Credit Courses

The UCLA faculty has voted to defy the regents by paying Miss Davis' salary out of their own pockets next year and permitting her to offer credit courses on campus.

Hitch said Friday the faculty can pay her if they want to but that she cannot teach a course for credit.

He also said rules adopted by the board last year "limit the number of guest lecturers and the number of lectures that can be given in a course" but he said he was not sure what would happen if Miss Davis moved from course to course as a guest lecturer next fall.

Rafferty said the board discussed this point in executive session but could not agree and decided to wait and see what happens in the fall quarter.

In a 28-page dissent, Coblentz said, "The record leaves no room for doubt that the majority of the board singled out Angela Davis for special treatment because of her admitted membership in the Communist Party."

Blocked by Courts

Coblentz noted that the board tried to fire Miss Davis last fall because of her party membership but was blocked by the courts.

"Now, under a most transparently improvised cover, (the regents) are seeking to deny her a renewal for that identical reason," Coblentz said.

The regents' action "represents a violation of academic freedom, as well as a violation of her freedom of speech under the First Amendment," he stated.

At a press conference after the executive session, Reagan stressed that the action against Miss Davis was based on "unprofessional conduct" and not on her membership in the Communist Party.

Reagan criticized her speeches — "particularly on those campuses where there was already trouble and dissension."

He said "academic freedom does not include . . . speaking to incite trouble on other campuses."